

# ThinkTEC Homeland Security Innovation Conference

By Susan Piedfort

*SPAWAR Systems Center Charleston participates in conference designed to bring together leaders from industry, science and technology — and the departments of Defense and Homeland Security to advance public and private partnerships.*

The 2007 ThinkTEC Homeland Security Innovation Conference provided a first-hand look at new technological advances that enable the warfighter and protect the homeland. The event, sponsored by the Charleston S.C., Metro Chamber of Commerce, was held at the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SSC) Charleston Feb. 21-23.

The goal of the conference was to accelerate the growth of high-tech and knowledge-based business in the region, and to showcase public and private partnership initiatives, technological advances and business opportunities for homeland security and business continuity planning.

The conference was attended by more than 400 leaders from the Navy and departments of Defense and Homeland Security, as well as representatives from technology, science, business and economic development. The conference featured more than 50 exhibits and demonstrations of innovative thinking that result in products for the warfighter and homeland security.

According to James Ward, executive director of SSC Charleston, the conference came at just the right time. "We are showing how we can ensure the safety and enablement of the warfighter, which affects everyone. Everyone is involved in the global war on terrorism," he said. "This is a great opportunity to connect with our peers..."

The conference featured international, national and regional briefings on suicide terrorism, transportation security, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) initiatives, Project Seahawk, infrastructure and disaster planning, and environmental hazards and recovery methods.

Bob Quinn, director of port and mari-

time security programs for the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, joined Frank Gutierrez, deputy director for Project Seahawk, to discuss an integrated detection system.

Project Seahawk, based in Charleston, is the nation's first collaborative counter-terrorism program set up to identify and respond to potential threats in U.S. waters and ports. Gutierrez, a former naval intelligence officer, discussed how local, state and federal task forces share information to protect ports from terrorist threats.

The conference format was a mix of featured speakers, panel discussions and hands-on exhibits and demonstrations. The event started with a pre-conference day of VIP tours. Attendees toured Charleston Air Force Base, and some got a bird's eye view of Charleston during a C-17 ride. After remarks by U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.), conference attendees looked at ballistic- and blast-proof vehicles while touring force protection security options in nearby Ladson.

The next two days included presentations, reports from political leaders, networking opportunities and exhibits of cutting-edge technologies.

*The Honorable Jay Cohen, Under Secretary for Science and Technology, Department of Homeland Security delivering the keynote address of the ThinkTEC Homeland Security Innovation Conference. Cohen is a retired Navy rear admiral whose last tour in the Navy was as Chief of Naval Research. Photo by Harold Senn.*

The Honorable Jay Cohen, a retired Navy rear admiral who now serves as the DHS Under Secretary for Science and Technology, delivered the keynote address. He praised SSC Charleston's success in the delivery of enhanced technology capabilities to the warfighter and to DHS.

In his discussion of future DHS initiatives, Cohen stressed the importance of innovation for the technological advances necessary to ensure mission success.

The former submariner pointed to the Confederate submarine H.L. Hunley as an example. "The Hunley started out as a boiler in Mississippi and was transformed into a warship," said Cohen, whose last tour in the Navy was as Chief of Naval Research. "The innovation you bring is often borne of necessity," he said.

Noting that terrorists take our technology and use it against us, Cohen said we must not only understand technology but also anticipate how it might be abused.

Panel discussions centered on business continuity planning for a disaster; business opportunities and collaboration; and disaster response and recovery.

Demonstrations and exhibits on the "Innovation Isle" featured a radio-controlled helicopter; binoculars which can provide wireless communication on the battlefield; and a video camera which can detect radioactive material.

Conference attendees were exposed to a variety of innovative systems all built for one purpose — to keep the warfighter and nation safe.

*Susan Piedfort is the editor of The Chronicle, a magazine published for SSC Charleston employees. For more information about SSC Charleston, go to <http://sscc.spawar.navy.mil>.*

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